Dragon Knights

13

Mineko Ohkami

Brought To You By:
Bloomie Scans
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Written and Illustrated by
Mineko Ohkami

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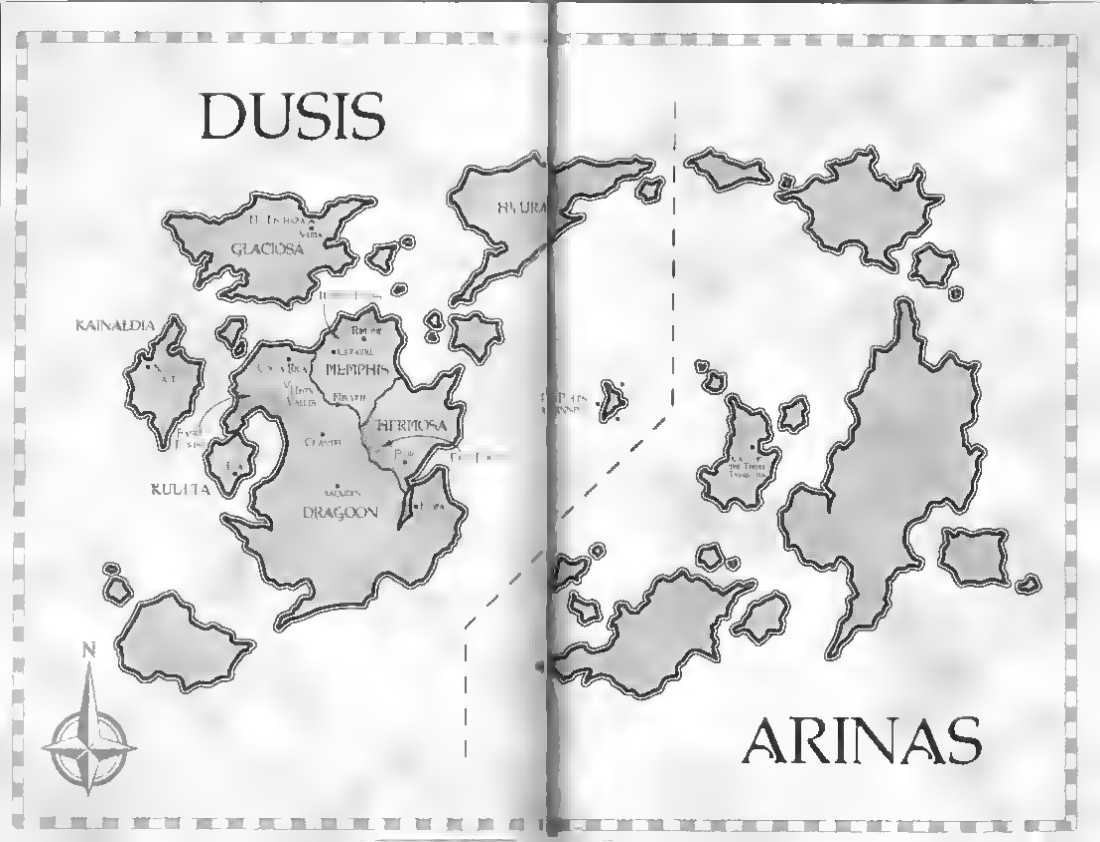

DUSIS
GLACIOSA
KAINALDIA
MEMPHIS
HERMOSA
KULITA
DRAGOON
N
ARINAS

CONTENTS

The Dragon Lord & The Demon Lord.....5
Dragon Knights: A World Away.....35

DRAGON KNIGHTS
ドラゴン騎士団
A World Away

Shortly before Nadi's resurrection
GEE, ALL THIS OVER SOME PERFUME?
YOU LIKE CHEESE, RIGHT? RIGHT?!
YOU'LL WEAR MY SCENT, WON'T YOU?
I WANT LORD NOHIRO TO WEAR THE SAME COLOGNE AS ME.
THAT ONE SMELLS LIKE SOMEONE'S WORN IT ALREADY!
Eastern Port City
Shion
Hanafuda
NOT A DAY GOES BY THAT I DON'T MARVEL AT HOW UN-CULTURED YOU ARE!
WHERE DID YOU FIND THESE COLOGNES? THEY'RE TERRIBLE!
I WOULDN'T SELL THEM TO A DEMON!

ARE YOU CRAZY? IT SMELLS LIKE CHEESE!
WE SHOULD GO WITH THIS ONE!
THIS ONE IS BETTER!
LORD NOHIRO DESERVES NOTHING BUT THE BEST AND THE REST WOULD BE THIS ONE.
YOU'RE BOTH NUTS!
HEY...
WHAT'S GOING ON?
UM.
I SEE.
WE'RE PICKING THE PERFECT SCENT
YOU MEAN I'M PICKING THE PERFECT SCENT
LORD!
WE'RE CHOOSING YOUR COLOGNE.

HEY, GUYS...
SOMEONE'S CALLING.
I CAN FEEL IT COMING FROM THE EAST.
BUT
IT DOES KEEP THINGS INTERESTING.
THAT'S RIGHT! BESIDES, IT COULDN'T BE FROM THE EAST.
THIS IS THE EASTERN PORT CITY. THE ONLY THING EAST OF HERE IS THE OCEAN.
ACTUALLY I'M STARTING TO SENSE IT, TOO
NOW, MIYAVI...
THE LAST TIME YOU FELT THAT, IT ENDED UP BEING INDIGESTION.
WE SPENT HALF THE DAY LOOKING FOR TROUBLED SOULS WHEN WE SHOULD HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR ANTACID.

STOP FIGHTING!
MONEY AGAIN. WHY ARE WE ALWAYS FIGHTING ABOUT MONEY?
EVERYONE KNOWS I'M THE MOST TALENTED FAERIE HERE!
WHAT?! YOU MADE NOHIRO BUY EXPENSIVE COLOGNE?!
THIS IS A DESIGNER SCENT, DEVELOPED BY ONE OF THE BEST MANUFACTURERS IN THE INDUSTRY!
AND THE MOST RIDICULOUS PART OF ALL OF THIS IS THAT I DON'T EVEN WEAR COLOGNE!
I SHOULDN'T HAVE ASKED MR. RUNE FOR ALL THREE.
IT'S MY FAULT.

YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW FRIGHTENING IT WAS.
I MEAN, I THOUGHT I WAS GONNA DIE!!
AHHH!!
YOU KNOW...
THERE MAY BE SOMETHING BEYOND THE OCEAN.
I'VE HEARD RUMORS OF A HUGE PHANTOM CONTINENT THAT EXISTS EAST OF HERE.
IT'S CALLED ARINAS.
REALLY?
SOUNDS EXCITING...
BUT IT IS COULDN'T POSSIBLY BE REAL, COULD IT?
NOHIRO?
SO ARE WE GOING?
CUZ I REALLY NEED TO START PACKING IF WE ARE.
LORD NOHIRO?

AAAA-H!!!
WHA?!
DEMON?
!!
MOVE IT!
DON'T JUST STAND THERE LIKE A DEER.
HUH?
OH, RIGHT.
LORD NOHIKO—
THIS WAY!

I MANAGED TO FIND A PIECE OF WOOD AND HELD ONTO IT FOR DEAR LIFE AS THE STORM CONTINUED TO RAGE. FOR DAYS IT WENT ON, EACH WORSE THAN THE ONE BEFORE. I COULDN'T SEE THE STARS OR THE SUN, SO I HAD NO IDEA WHERE I WAS OR WHICH DIRECTION I WAS HEADING. IT WAS SO DARK, AND I WAS HUNGRY, SLEEPY AND TIRED...
THEN, OUT OF NOWHERE, WE WERE HIT BY ONE OF THE WORST STORMS I'VE EVER SEEN. IT BROUGHT DOWN OUR ENTIRE SHIP!
EVERY-THING WAS CALM WHEN WE LEFT.
きらりん
ALL BECAUSE I HAD THREE FAERIES PROTECTING ME.
, AND YET, I MANAGED TO GET HERE SAFELY
YOU, UH...
YOU MUST SUPPOSE THERE ARE DEMONS ARE, DO'YOUT
HEY, NOHIKO.
SO.
WHERE AM I?

I REMEMBER ONE TIME I HEARD THIS NAME...
THEN.
I TOLD YOU.
..I DON'T HAVE ANY MEMORIES, RIGHT?
THIS MAY BE A CLUE TO YOUR PAST.
THAT'S WHY I'M ALWAYS PURSUING THINGS I DON'T UNDERSTAND, I SUPPOSE.
..AND FOR NO REASON AT ALL, I GOT A HEADACHE. WHAT WAS IT ..?
NOT BEING ABLE TO REMEMBER A NAME IS ANNOYING, BUT YOU KNOW WHAT'S I WORSE? NOT BEING ABLE TO GET A SONG OUT OF YOUR HEAD ! REMEMBER THIS ONE TIME WHEN I COULDN'T STOP HUMMING~
WHY CAN'T I REMEMBER?
IT WAS A NAME MR. RUNE TOLD ME!
GAAAAH!!
WHERE'S SHIAN?
HEY..
HOLD ON.

I WONDER IF THERE'S SOME-WHERE WE CAN HIDE.
A CAVE WOULD BE PERFECT!
THE DEMON ENERGY IS SO STRONG HERE THAT I CAN SENSE IT PHYSI-CALLY.
UH...
I THINK ALL OF US CAN SENSE IT PHYSI-CALLY, MYAAN.
THERE ARE DEMONS EVERY-WHERE!
I'LL BET THE PERSON I FELT CALLING ME WAS A DEMON.
LORD NOHIRO ..
CAN YOU STILL SENSE SOMEONE CALLING?
YES.
AND I FEEL LIKE THEY'RE GETTING CLOSER AND CLOSER.
WHO IS CALLING ME?
COULD IT REALLY BE THE "ONE WINGED ANGEL"?

HEY!
STOP IT!
NOHIRO!
NOHIRO!
COME QUICK.
I FOUND SOMETHING HUGE!
THEY'RE LIKE FRUIT... ONLY CRUNCHY.
WOW!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THESE THINGS ARE, BUT THEY SURE ARE YUMMY!
I'M BRINGING THESE BACK FOR NOHIRO.
AND THERE ARE SO MANY OF THEM!
NOHIRO!
ITS SHIAN.
WHAT'S THAT?
I FOUND A CASTLE!
IT'S ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WOODS.
IT CAN'T BE.
IN ARINAS?
CASTLE?

COME ON, GUYS.
SOMEONE'S INSIDE.
AND THEY'RE CALLING ME.
NOHIRO?
OTHERWISE, HE'D KNOW THAT THIS CASTLE IS THE MOST DANGEROUS PLACE IN ARINAS.
DO YOU FEEL IT?
IT'S VERY STRONG HERE.
WE MUST PROTECT NOHIRO FROM THE EVIL HERE.
LORD NOHIRO CAN'T DETECT DEMON ENERGY VERY WELL.
MYAB..
SHIAN..
IT'S PROBABLY ABANDONED
NO ONE LIVES IN ARINAS, RIGHT?
THAT'S OKAY, MIYABI
THAT'S A CASTLE, ALL RIGHT.
YOU CAN TELL BY THE BRICKS AND—
THAT'S WHAT THEY SAY.
ANYWAY
SHALL WE HAVE A LOOK AROUND?
HUH?
WAIT.
WHAT'S THIS?

THAT'S WEIRD.
NO ONE'S HERE.
EEK!
WHAT IF SOME DEMON COMES OUT?
QUIT TRYING TO SCARE ME!
IF HE EATS YOU, I HAVE DIES ON YOUR TOADSTOOL COLLECTION.
FOR ONCE, HANAMURO...
...YOU ARE RIGHT.
HERE.
THIS IS THE PLACE.
THE CALL IS COMING FROM BACK THERE

THIS LIGHT BALL IS ASKING ME TO RELEASE IT.
IT'S BEEN SENDING ME THIS MESSAGE...
...FOR A LONG TIME NOW.
NO, NOHIRO! DON'T TOUCH THAT SPEAR!
IT'S A DEMON'S SPEAR! IT'S POISONED!
LORD NOHIRO! IT'S TOO DANGEROUS.
DON'T DO IT!
NOHIRO, THAT'S A MAGIC SWORD FILLED WITH EVIL!
IT'S ALL RIGHT, YOU GUYS.
HMM...
WHAT'S THAT?

ジュウウ…
WAS THAT COOL OR WHAT?
I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
HOW COULD YOU TOUCH SOMETHING LIKE THAT?!
NOHIRO, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!
DID IT DO ANYTHING STRANGE TO YOU?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
CAN WE GO, GUYS?
THIS PLACE IS CREEPY.
YOU CAN'T SENSE IT, BUT THIS PLACE IS FULL OF DEMON ENERGY.
スゥーッ…
AAAH!!

HEY!
IT'S RUNES, GIRLFRIEND.
LADY TINTLET?
THIS CASTLE BELONGS TO THE RENOW WIZARD.
YOU'RE IN GREAT DANGER. YOU MUST LEAVE RIGHT AWAY.
YOU MUST NOT STAY HERE.
SHE DISAPPEARED
OH, NO.
LORD NOHIRO!
LET'S GO!
THEY'RE HERE.
LEAVING ALREADY??
I DON'T GET IT. WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL? THAT ALWAYS HAS BEEN THE EVIL MAGIC SWORD.
THAT DEMON'S SPEAR WAS PRETTY WEIRD. WHY WOULD SHE RUN LIKE THAT? BUT I'M FINE!
ARE YOU SURE? I FEEL FINE.
SHE'S RIGHT, LORD NOHIRO!
WE SHOULD LEAVE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!
LISTEN TO ME!
FIGURE IT OUT LATER. LET'S GET OUTTA HERE.
THAT LIGHT BALL...
I WONDER WHAT IT WAS.
HMM...
PLEASE HURRY
HURRY...

I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU GOT IN HERE, BUT...
YOU ARE TRESPASSING ON LORD KHAEL'S PROPERTY.
THAT'S PRETTY DUM... YOU MUST BE NEW AROUND HERE.
OTHERWISE, YOU'D KNOW BETTER...
THAN TO BRING THREE FAERIES WITH YOU.
HUH?
WHAT?!
LORD NOHIRO, WHAT DO WE DO?
IT'S HIM!
HE'S THE ONE WHO'S BEEN KILLING ALL THE FAERIES.
NONE OTHER.
WAIT!
THAT WAS YOU?
BUT YOU'RE TALKIN' ANCIENT HISTORY, MAN.
FAERIES ARE A THING OF THE PAST, SO TO SPEAK.
SO IT REALLY WAS HIM.
AT LEAST, I THOUGHT THEY WERE.
UNTIL YOU SHOWED UP WITH THREE OF THEM.
SO LET'S SEE IF WE CAN CORRECT THAT, SHALL WE?
I LOVE A GOOD HUNT.
YOU HAVE NO IDEA...
HOW MUCH I HATE LEAVING A JOB UNFINISHED. IT'S A LITTLE PET PEEVE OF MINE.

NICE DODGE!
YOU'RE QUICKER THAN YOU LOOK. WELL, RUN, RUN, LITTLE RABBIT...
...YOU'RE FAR FROM HOME...
...AND THE WOLF GROWS EVER CLOSER.
GEE, THANKS.
WHY DON'T YOU HELP ME FIND THE EXIT?
WE SHOULD'VE LEFT WHEN I TOLD YOU TO!
WHAT?!
NO, I DON'T! I WAS FOLLOWING THE VOICE, REMEMBER?
I DON'T KNOW WHERE WE ARE!
YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO GET OUT?
I MEAN, WHAT'S THE POINT? THE RESULT'S THE SAME.
DEATH FOR YOU AND YOUR THEME FRIENDS.
OF COURSE, THEY CALL IT MURDER WHEN YOU HUNT HUMANS, BUT WHY ARGUE OVER SEMANTICS?
HE'S A HUMAN!
I DON'T SENSE DEMON ENERGY IN HIM!
I DON'T THINK SO!
IS HE...
...A DEMON?!

AAAAGGH!
!!
DAMN!
OH, NO!
OH, PLEASE NO...
HURRY...
...UP
THEN, NOHIRO, WOULD YOU BE SO KIND...
AS TO TELL ME WHERE WE ARE HEADED?
I HAVE NO BLOODY IDEA!
ALL THAT MATTERS IS THAT IT'S AWAY FROM THE GUY WITH THE BIG KNIFE.
WELL, THAT'S GREAT.
MAYBE I SHOULD FLY OUTSIDE AND TAKE A LOOK AROUND.
THEN WE'D KNOW WHERE WE ARE.
ARE YOU CRAZY? DON'T LEAVE ME!
!!
WATCH OUT!
HANAKUSUKU!

HE TURNED MY WEAPON INTO ASH.
I DON'T BELIEVE IT!!
WH-WHO THE HELL IS HE?
IS HE EVEN HUMAN?!

WHAT IS IT?
...SEEMS EVEN MORE DANGEROUS THAN WHERE WE WERE.
NO HERO...
THIS PLACE...

HEY! WAIT!
I'M LOST!
YOU'RE JUST NOW REALIZING THAT?!
THIS IS WORSE THAN WE THOUGHT.
NEXT TIME WE NEED A VACATION I LET'S GO CAMPING.
HURRY UP! BEFORE THAT SCARY SHORTCUT FINDS US AGAIN.
YEAH, OKAY.
NOHIRO!!
SOME THINGS...
WRONG.
LORD NOHIRO!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? JUST STAND UP!
I CAN'T MOVE.
WHAT'S WRONG?
GET UP!
UGH
NOHIRO!

THAT SWORD WAS CREATED FROM ASH.
POISON WOULD HAVE MADE THE SPELL IMPOSSIBLE.
IMPOSSIBLE.
DO YOU THINK.
...THE POISONED SWORD DID THIS?
JEEZ, MAN. YOU LOOK LIKE HELL.
NAH, IF YOU ASK ME...
...I'D SAY YOUR BOY TOY'S JUST TIRED.
I JUST WISH I COULD TAKE THE CREDIT FOR THIS.
LIAR! YOU DID THIS!
MY... ...BODY...
CAN'T
...IT'S NUMB.
COME ON, NOHIRO!
I'M... ...SORRY...
PULL! HURRY!
NOHIRO!

MY CLIENT PLEADS NOT GUILTY, YOUR HONOR. IT WASN'T ME.
DON'T WORRY! I'M TIRED OF TOY-TURING FAERIES
IT NO LONGER AMUSES ME.
BUT SINCE HE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE GOING ANYWHERE, I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO ENTERTAIN MYSELF WITH YOU.
HEH, HEH.
KILLING THEM, ON THE OTHER HAND...
HOW ABOUT I BE NICE AND GIVE YOU A HEAD START?
LORD NOHITRO!
DAMN!
WAIT...
THAT NAME...
REMEMBER...
THE ONE MR RUNE MENTIONED..
IT WAS RATH

no...
WHY?
WHY COULDN'T I MOVE BEFORE?

HMM... WHICH WAY IS MOST FUN?
A GUY DOESN'T GET TO DISMEMBER FAERIES EVERY DAY YOU KNOW
WELL... HOW ABOUT I GIVE IT A SHOT ANYWAY?
YOU BASTARD!
WE WON'T LET YOU HURT LORD NOHIRO!
AWW! REALLY?
SHIAN!
NOHIRO!
UGH...
AGH...
NOT BAD.
YOU CONTINUE TO IMPRESS ME.
BUT YOU'RE NO HERO, NOHIRO!
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?
YOU'RE NOT HUMAN, ARE YOU?

...DID YOU REALLY...
...KILL ALL THOSE FAERIES?
TELL ME...
YES. ABSOLUTELY
SO MANY, IN FACT, THAT I'VE LOST COUNT.
LORD KHARL WANTED THE FAERIES' POWER TO REVIVE LEFT BIRD.
AND LORD KHARL ALWAYS GETS WHAT HE WANTS. KIND OF ANNOYING, ACTUALLY. I THINK IT'S GONE TO HIS HEAD
THAT'S WHY HE KILLED THE FAERIES?
BET YOU'RE WONDERING WHAT THAT IS, HUH?
IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE A MUTATED TADPOLE, BUT IT'S ACTUALLY THE ORIGIN. THE THING FROM WHICH WE'LL CREATE LORD KHARL'S MASTER.
ANYHOW, THE FAERIES ARE GONE. LEFT BIRD'S HARD GET USED TO IT!
SO ARE YOU DEMON? OR DRAGON TRIBE?
OR PERHAPS YOU'RE A FAERIE.
ONE CAN NEVER TELL THESE DAYS.
WHAT?
I'M...
...NOT HUMAN?
NOHIRO!
AAAAHH!!
I'M SURE LORD KHARL COULD FIGURE IT OUT.
BUT THAT WOULD MEAN KEEPING YOU ALIVE UNTIL HE COMES BACK.

ゴボッ…
ゴボッ…
AS YOU KNOW, IT'S JUST ABOUT DINNERTIME. THE SPECIAL TODAY HERE AT THE CASTLE...
...IS DEATH SEEDS.
NO!
WE WON'T LET YOU KILL HIM NOHARA!
IS IT REALLY DINNERTIME? NO WONDER I'M HUNGRY
ANYHOW...
BACK TO THE BUSINESS AT HAND. YOU'VE NOT ONLY MADE A MESS OF LORD KHAIR'S CASTLE, BUT YOU HAVE BROKEN HIS SEAL BY RELEASING THOSE TEMS.
THAT'S A BIG NO-NO... AND THE PENALTY IS DEATH.
THE "ORIGIN"?
ゴォン…!
IT'S MUTATING SLOWLY, BUT IT'LL BE READY TO RAISE HELL SOON ENOUGH.
ゴォン
I HATE TO SAY IT, BUT PLAYTIME'S OVER.
IT'S TIME TO GET DOWN TO BUSINESS.

HUH?
DID I DO THAT?
I SENSE GREAT POWER NEARBY
IMPOSSIBLE
HOW...
HOW DID HE DO THAT?
HE AWOKE THE ONIGIN AND CAUSED IT TO GO THROUGH A METAMORPHOSIS.
LORD KHAOS GONNA BE PISSED...

NOHIRO!!
NOOOOOO!!!
HANAK-USUKU!
MY LORD
RUN!
RUN...
COME ON!
QUICK!

YES... GREAT POWER.
IT HAS AWAKENED ME.
AND THE SOURCE OF THAT POWER...
...IS STANDING RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME!
LORD NOHIRO!

LADY TWILIGHT!
HUH?
THE SOURCE OF THE POWER IS RUNNING AWAY.
THAT JUST WON'T DO
HEY, YOU WOKE THIS OVERGROWN PLATE OF CALAMARI UP—NO WAY YOU'RE LEAVING ME TO DEAL WITH IT!
!
!
YOU'RE IN MY WAY!
DAMMIT!

NO!
WE CAN'T.
IT'S TOO DANGEROUS.
HANAK USUKU SACRIFICED HERSELF SO YOU COULD ESCAPE THAT HELLHOLE.
SHE WANTED YOU TO LIVE.
HANAK USUKU
WE HAVE TO...
...GO BACK.
THAT GIANT DEMON'S STILL IN THERE...
...NOT TO MENTION THE CRAZY GUY WITH THE SWORD.

SHIAN...
NOTHING HAPPENED.
THOUGHT I WAS OKAY
BACK WHEN W-WE WERE INSIDE.
I WAS HIT BY ONE OF THOSE. SEEDS.
SHIAN...
I WILL USE MY POWER OF REBIRTH.
DOES THAT MEAN...
HAVE NO FEAR.
...WE WILL MEET AGAIN SOME DAY?

SHE LOOKED SO SCARED
I CAN'T LEAVE HER IN THERE ALL ALONE.
HANAK-USUKU...
I MUST GO BACK TO SAVE HER.
SHIAN!
NOWAY...
I WAS GIVEN THE POWER OF REBIRTH.
I CAN BRING HANAKUSUKU BACK.

THE ONE-WINGED ANGEL IS THE LORD OF THE CASTLE.
THE KID WITH THE SWORD IS HIS UNDERLING.
THANK YOU...
...MIYABI.
THEIR DEVOTION IS UNWAVERING. THEIR LOYALTY, UNMATCHED. I JUST WISH THEY COULD TELL ME WHO I AM...
HE IS KHARL, THE ALCHEMIST.
HE USED TO BE KNOWN AS THE RENKIN WIZARD.
OF COURSE. WHEREVER YOU ARE... I'LL FIND YOU.
NEXT TIME... I WON'T FAIL IN PROTECTING YOU..
I'LL BE WAITING.
DON'T CRY, NOHIRO.
YOU STILL HAVE ME.
I WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU.
I'LL BE WITH YOU UNTIL THE VERY END... AND LONG, LONG AFTER THAT

I'VE SPENT THE LAST FIVE YEARS SEARCHING HIGH AND LOW FOR FAERIES.
...AND AROUND EVERY CORNER, I FOUND NOTHING BUT DISAPPOINTMENT. EVERYONE TOLD ME THAT THEY NO LONGER EXISTED.
I THOUGHT I COULD HELP THEM BY USING MY POWER OF REBIRTH.
AND IN EXCHANGE, I HAD HOPED THEY'D HELP ME FIGURE OUT WHO I AM.
BUT WHAT ABOUT THE FAERIES?
MR. RUNE SAID THAT FAERIES COULDN'T REPRODUCE UNLESS THEY ARE GIVEN THE POWER OF THE FAERIE ELDER.
WELL...
...THAT'S ALL GOOD...
NOHIRO, YOU ARE A FRIEND TO THE FAERIES, AND I WISH YOU THE BEST OF LUCK...
...BUT TRY NOT TO GET INTO ANY MORE TROUBLE.
YES, MA'AM.
I UNDERSTAND.

THERE IS NOT. ARINAS IS A CONTINENT OF DEATH.
SURELY THERE MUST BE SOMEONE ELSE.
RIGHT NOW, KHARL AND GARFAKCY ...ARE THE ONLY TWO LEFT IN ARINAS.
BUT THAT MIGHT SOON CHANGE. THAT SEAL YOU BROKE WAS A SPELL THAT KEPT NEW LIFE FROM GROWING HERE.
NO ONE LIVES HERE ANYMORE.
I DID THAT?
THE ONCE-RUINED CONTINENT OF ARINAS CAN FLOURISH AGAIN
YOU HAVE DONE A VERY BRAVE THING, NOHIRO.

HUH?!
BOOI

IS IT A DEMON?

OKAY, DNE. ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF. MY EXPLOITS ARE KNOWN FROM THE PEAK OF EMPHAZA TO THE SHORES OF ARNAS. I'VE RUINED ROYAL FAMILIES AND DRIVEN LEADERS TO MADNESS ALL WHILE LOOKING INCREDIBLY GOOD I MIGHT ADD.
HAHN
A DEMON?
YOU INSULT ME, CHILD. YOU DON'T RECOGNIZE ME?
I AM THE MASTER OF MISCHIEF, THE SIDE-BRAND OF FAERIES! THE ONE AND ONLY MR. COW!
YOU'VE PROBABLY WONDERED WHY MY HAVOC-WREAKING WAYS HAVE TAPERED OFF SOMEWHAT LATELY. WELL, I'VE BEEN WANDERING AROUND DOWN HERE ALL YEAR. I'M COMPLETELY LOST
WELL, I'VE NEVER HEARD OF YOU
WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF ME?! I'M MR. COW. THE MR. COW!
I ABHOR ALL HAPPINESS. I THRIVE ON MAKING ALL THOSE I MEET UNHAPPY.
CHILDREN QUIVER AT THE SOUND OF MY NAME.
ARE YOU A DEMON?!
WHO ARE YOU? ANSWER ME!
HUH?
WHAT'S GOING ON?

YOU COULD'VE JUST BOUGHT MY BOOK, *HAPPY PEOPLE SUCK!* IT'S AVAILABLE AT FINE BOOKSTORES EVERYWHERE, NOW WITH A REWRITTEN INTRODUCTION AND A NEW CHAPTER ENTITLED "RELICS AND ROCKS: MY LIFE IN THE WATER CAVE." IT'S BEEN ON THE BESTSELLER LIST FOR MONTHS! OH, AND IF YOU'RE HEADING TO THE BOOKSTORE, DO YOU THINK YOU COULD BE A DEAR AND SNAG ME THE LATEST COPY OF *DRAGON KNIGHTS?* IT'S MY FAVORITE MANGA. HEY, HAVE YOU NOTICED THAT AFTER THE FIRST VOLUME YOU NEVER SEE ANY OF THE DRAGONS BESIDES FIRE? WHY IS THAT?
HUH.
WHO CARES WHAT HE WANTS?! WE NEED TO GET *OUT* OF HERE!
DO YOU THINK HE WANTS THE THREE TREASURES?
KITCHEL, IS THAT A DEMON? HE DOESN'T SEEM TOO SCARY.
WE'D BETTER HURRY, RINGLEYS.
I DIDN'T KNOW HE MEANT UNDERGROUND *LITERALLY*. THAT LITTLE BASTARD TRICKED ME!
WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN FUNNY AS HELL IF THE FIRST ORDER OUT OF ITS MOUTH WASN'T TO FIND ME. THE PLACE GUARD HUNTED ME DOWN AND RAN ME OUT OF MEMPHIS. I THOUGHT I'D LAY LOW FOR A WHILE, GET BACK TO MY ROOTS. WHEN THIS ONE GUY TOLD ME HE KNEW THIS GREAT UNDERGROUND CLUB THAT WOULD LOVE SOMEONE LIKE ME, I ASKED HIM TO SHOW ME THE WAY.
AND IF YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL *AND* HAPPY--WATCH OUT! TAKE PRINCE EUCLID AND PRINCESS MELNINA OF MEMPHIS. THEY WERE UNBEARABLE! FIRST, I CHANGED EUCLID INTO A DEMON AND MADE MELNINA GET SICK. THEN, WHEN THAT DIDN'T WORK OUT, I PLACED A SLEEPING SPELL ON THE PRINCE AND TURNED THE PRINCESS INTO A FROG. UNFORTUNATELY, I FORGOT TO TAKE AWAY MELNINA'S VOICE, SO NOW THE ENTIRE MEMPHIS ARMY IS TAKING ITS ORDERS FROM A VEGETABLE.
I DESPISE BEAUTY IN ALL ITS FORMS.
HEY, WAIT A MINUTE!
WHY AM I TELLING YOU ALL THIS?! I HAVE BETTER THINGS TO DO THAN TELL YOU MY LIFE STORY!
FOR A LITTLE WHILE, I TRIED MAKING BALLOON ANIMALS. THE LESS SAID ABOUT THAT, THE BETTER. BUT THOSE DAYS ARE IN THE PAST, AND NOW I'VE FINALLY HIT ON SOMETHING THAT WORKS FOR ME.
I'VE DECIDED TO APPLY MY CONSIDERABLE SKILLS TO THE FIELD OF MAGIC PROCUREMENT! I'M A TREASURE HUNTER, BABY! THE BEST IN THE BIZ! AH, I WOULD BE, IF THE BIZ WEREN'T SO COMPETITIVE.
BUT AS MY GRANDMOTHER USED TO SAY, IF YOU CAN'T PLAY WHERE YOU'D LIKE, LEARN TO LIKE WHERE YOU PLAY. AND THIS PLACE ISN'T SO BAD! THERE ARE PLENTY OF PEOPLE STUCK DOWN HERE.
UNFORTUNATELY, THEY'RE NOT THE BEST CROWD FOR SOMEONE WHO SPECIALIZES IN DESTROYING HAPPINESS, SINCE MOST OF THEM ARE PRETTY UNHAPPY ON THEIR OWN! I HAD TO FIND A NEW GIG.

OH, YOU HAVE GOT TO BE KIDDING!
I WAS JUST JOKING ABOUT THE HUSSY THING. C'MON! DON'T GO! TELL YOU WHAT--I'LL SING FOR YOU. YOU'RE GONNA LOVE THIS.
"I WRITE THE SONGS THAT MAKE THE WHOLE WORLD SING.
I WRITE THE SONGS OF LOVE AND SPECIAL THINGS..."
UH WAIT A MINUTE! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
AS IF THESE GUYS WEREN'T ENOUGH TO DRIVE PEOPLE CRAZY ON THEIR OWN...
COME ON, DON'T LEAVE! YOU HAVEN'T EVEN HEARD MY VERSION OF IMPOSSIBLE DREAM YET!
HMPH! SHE COULD HAVE AT LEAST TIPPED ME..
HEY, OVER HERE!
DON'T TEMPT ME.
WHADDYA THINK?
THROW HIM IN THE HOLE?
OH OVER THERE! I THINK THERE'S A DEEP HOLE!
LOOK, I'VE BEEN UNHAPPY SINCE I MET YOU. HAPPY NOW? GO AWAY!
I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS!
HEY, PRINCESS! I'VE PLAYED SOME COLD ROOMS, BUT I'VE NEVER HAD ANYONE WALK OUT ON ME BEFORE! WHY, I'VE HAD KINGS ASK TO HEAR MY LIFE STORY. KINGS! YOU OBVIOUSLY HAVE NO APPRECIATION OF THE ARTS.
HE WON'T LEAVE US ALONE.
WE'RE GONNA HAVE TO RUN.
YOU HUSSY!

WHAT?!
I BROUGHT TO SCREAMING MAN.
GET OFF ME, YOU FAT COW!
I SAID TO THROW HIM IN THE HOLE.
NOT JUMP IN YOURSELF!
HEY, I RECOGNIZE THAT VOICE...
WHAT CAN I SAY? I PANIC AT THE SOUND OF SHOW TUNES.
DO YOU THINK THEY REVIVED NADIL?
NAH, THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE.
TIMES SURE ARE TOUGH.
MAN, NADIL'S ARMY IS EVERYWHERE. AND THERE ARE HARDLY ANY HUMANS AROUND THESE DAYS.
IT MAKES IT TOUGH TO FIND TREASURE.
WHAT'S THAT NOISE?
WHAT'S GOING ON?
THAT GUY LOOKS FAMILIAR...
OH...
NO!
THAT'S
KITCHEL, IT'S EKIDONNA! WE GOTTA RUN!!
...EKIDONNA!
HUH?
AAAAAH!

MISTRESS OKAMI!
ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES THE GIRL WITH THE TREASURE OF THE DRAGON TRIBE IS HIDING IN THIS CAVE!
YES, MAAM!
HURRY UP!

THAT'S RIGHT! HE'S THAT DEMON WHO WAS BRAGGING ABOUT BEING A THIEF!
WE TICKED HIM OFF, REMEMBER?
WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?
HEY... THOSE ARE THE GUYS WHO STOLE MY TREASURE AND TORE DOWN MY TOWER!

DARLING, PLEASE LOOK AFTER US FROM HEAVEN, AND MAY YOUR SPIRIT GUIDE US ON THE BATTLEFIELD!
YES!
GUIDE US!
NADL WILL RUE THE DAY HE CROSSED PATHS WITH THE WOLF CLAN!
AND WE'RE GONNA NEED MONEY! LOTS OF IT. THINK OF IT AS OUR WAR FUND!
RIGHT, OKAMI-SAN!
WE ARE RIGHT BEHIND YOU. WE WILL AVENGE OUR LEADER'S DEATH!
AS IF MR. COW WASN'T BAD ENOUGH, NOW I HAVE EKIDONNA TO DEAL WITH AS WELL!
THIS IS JUST GREAT!
OH, MY BELOVED, I'M AFRAID I HAVE FAILED YOU.
I TRIED TO FINISH THE QUEST IN YOUR PLACE AND RETRIEVE NADL'S HEAD, BUT IT APPEARS HIS ARMY HAS GOTTEN TO IT FIRST. AND NOW WE'VE RECEIVED WORD THAT THEY'VE REVIVED HIM.
MY DARLING!
SOB...
MISTRESS OKAMI!
YES, MISTRESS OKAMI!
OKAY BOYS, MAKE SURE YOU GRAB EVERYTHING THAT WE'RE GONNA NEED!
I DON'T KNOW WHO WE'RE LOOKING FOR YET, BUT WHEN WE FIND 'EM, WE'RE GONNA GIVE 'EM A GOOD FIGHT!
MY DARLING...
I WILL AVENGE YOUR DEATH! THIS I DO SOLEMNLY SWEAR!

WE COULD KEEP GOING DOWN THIS TUNNEL..
...BUT HOW LONG IS IT GOING TO BE BEFORE WE FIND THE EXIT?
I'VE BEEN THINKING, RINGLEYS.
KITCHEL?
BUT...
SHOULDN'T WE JUST FOLLOW THE MAP?
HUH?
TIME PASSES DIFFERENTLY HERE IN THE TUNNEL.
WE DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH TIME HAS PASSED IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD.
WHOEVER CAST THE SPELL ON THIS CAVE DID ONE HELLUVA JOB.
HE WOULDN'T HAVE MADE IT EASY TO ESCAPE.
OH...
I SEE...

...REALLY... DON'T KNOW... WHAT YOU'RE T-TALKING ABOUT.
YOU'RE LYING! WANT IT BACK!
HOW DARE YOU SPEAK TO ME LIKE THAT!! I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!
HEY, SHORTY! ARE YOU THE ONE WHO'S BEEN STEALING MY TREASURE DOWN HERE?
BESIDES, YOU... HAVE NO EVIDENCE. YOU CAN'T PROVE ANYTHING.
WAAAIT!!
KITCHEL, I THINK WE'RE LOST.
WE SHOULD LOOK AT THE MAP.
HUH?
LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE FIGHTING.

どかか
WHAT NOW?
MY HUSBAND'S DEATH MUST BE AVENGED..
AND YOUR TREASURE WILL PROVIDE THE MEANS TO DO IT!
THIS HAS BEEN ONE SCREWED UP DAY!
I HOPE THOSE THINGS HAVE HAD THEIR SHOTS!
What was that thing?!
DON'T THEY KNOW WHEN T QUIT?
ヒカカ
THERE YOU ARE, YOU SNEAKY THIEVES.
HUH?
WE COULD JUST BE GOING AROUND IN A CIRCLE OF DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS..
THAT'S RIGHT! WE'RE IN A HURRY.
SORRY! WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR YOU RIGHT NOW!

WHENEVER I GET A SPARE MOMENT...
I MUST HAVE A LOT OF SPARE MOMENTS, BECAUSE THAT'S ALL I EVER THINK ABOUT.
SIGH...
WHAT ARE THE THREE TREASURES, ANYWAY?
...I TRY TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THESE THREE TREASURES ARE AND WHAT THEY'RE USED FOR.
THEN I THINK ABOUT HOW RICH I'LL BE WHEN I FINALLY GET OUT OF HERE.
ARRGH! IT'S SO FRUSTR--TING!
THOSE GUYS SURE ARE PERSISTENT.
ESPECIALLY THAT LITTLE ONE.
AIN'T THAT THE TRUTH.
WHAT I WONDER IS WHY STOP AT THREE? WHY NOT FOUR TREASURES? OR FIVE?
THE TREASURES ARE NO USE TO THE DRAGON LORD...
...IF WE DON'T FIND A WAY OUT OF THIS BLASTED CAVE!
NO
I'M GONNA'S NOT MUCH BETTER.
MISTRESS! OKAY!! WE MUST HURRY.
HEY, TELL THESE GUYS THIS IS A CAVE, NOT A FOXHOLE!!
MRMPH! MRGPH!
WHAT THE HELL?! WHO LET THE DOGS IN?!
ARE YOU TRYING TO START A MUTINY, PRIVATE?! BOYS, WE HAVE A TRAITOR IN OUR MIDST. CHEW ON HIM AS YOU SEE FIT!
SO, HOW ARE WE GONNA AVENGE HIS DEATH?
Right!
BUT WE DON'T KNOW WHO KILLED HIM!
WE MUST AVENGE OUR LEADER'S DEATH!
DOOKAY... APPARENTLY, THERE'S A FULL MOON OUT.

HE WAS QUIET MYSTERIOUS. LIKE HE WAS KEEPING SOME SORT OF SECRET...
HE'S DIFFERENT FROM THE REST.
I GUESS YOU HAVE TO BE STRONG IF YOU'RE A DRAGON OFFICER.
HE PROBABLY WAS.
MAN...
WHAT AM I DOING, WASTING MY THOUGHTS ON SOMEONE WHO CAN'T HELP ME NOW?
GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES...
...I MUST AGREE WITH YOU.

I WISH THE GANG WAS HERE.
THE GANG?
YOU KNOW, THE DRAGON TRIBE.
YEAH. THE GUYS WHO WERE SUPPOSED TO PROTECT US.
THEY COULD'VE AT LEAST HELPED ME CARRY STUFF.
I KNOW WHY THEY LEFT.
YOU CAN BE REALLY BOSSY, KITCHEL.
ALL THE SAME, THOSE DRAGON FIGHTERS SURE WEREN'T MUCH HELP.
NOW THEIR CAPTAIN'S A DIFFERENT STORY. HE WAS VERY STRONG.
I KNOW.
THEY WEREN'T VERY STRONG.
IF THEY WERE HERE, WE WOULDN'T HAVE TO FIGHT THESE LOW-LEVEL DEMONS.
BUT I DON'T THINK I'D TRUST THEM UP AGAINST A STRONG ONE.

NOW WHAT WAS IT I WANTED TO TELL YOU GUYS?
OH, THAT'S RIGHT. GOODBYE!
PAAARRR?!

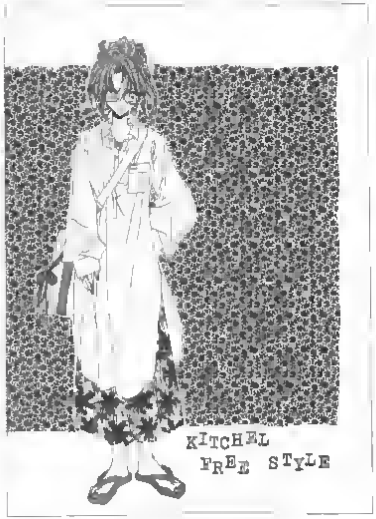
I'M TRYING TO REGALE YOU WITH MY LIFE STORY.
HEY, YOU BASTARDS! BE QUIET!
I SAW THE TREASURE FIRST. WHILE THE GIRL WAS SLEEPING, I TIPTOED QUIETLY UP TO HER. WITHOUT A SINGLE NOISE PASSING MY LIPS, I EXPERTLY REMOVED THE TREASURE FROM BENEATH HER ARM. HEY, STOP INTERRUPTING MY STORY! THAT'S IT, I'M CALLING MY AGENT!
LET ME THROUGH! THOSE TWO STOLE MY TREASURE!
PLEASE HURRY, MISTRESS OKAMI!
YOU CAN'T PREVENT US FROM SEEKING OUR REVENGE!
GOODNESS.

WHAT?
DO YOU NEED HELP?
LET ME AT 'EM!
I HAVE OLD SCORES TO SETTLE!
IT'S A GHOST!!!
A ROCK DEMON!
HURRY UP AND SMASH IT!
HEY LITTLE GUY, DON'T YOU EVER SHUT UP?
I'VE HAD TOMATOES TOSSED AT ME BY NO LESS THAN THE EARL OF BEAKSFIELD! YOU THINK I CAN'T HANDLE A FEW PEBBLES?!
I DIDN'T MEAN TO DO ALL THAT.
OH, WOW.
MAKES YOU FEEL KINDA BAD FOR THEM.
NOW'S OUR CHANCE!

KITCHEL'S NOT TAKING THIS VERY WELL.
NO BODY. TRANSPARENT. THAT'S SCARY ENOUGH FOR ME.
NEVER MIND. THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT I'M NOT HERE TO SCARE YOU OBVIOUSLY.
ACTUALLY, AH, I'M A SPECTER. GHOSTS CAN'T ACTUALLY TALK. IT'S A TIME DISTINCTION, NOT ONE THAT—
SO YOU ARE A GHOST!
GET OUTTA MY WAY! I CALL DIBS ON PULLING THE FAERIES WINGS OFF!
WHAT CAN A GHOST DO?
THOSE DEMONS
WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO GET RID OF THEM FOR YOU?

きゃ!
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS.
OH WAIT...
I GUESS AM SORTA LIKE A GHOST.
OH, YES. SORRY ABOUT THAT. MY BODY DIED A LONG TIME AGO
HOW CAN I TRUST YOU WHEN I CAN'T EVEN SEE YOU?
I'M HERE TO HELP YOU.
BUT DON'T WORRY. I'M NOT YOUR ENEMY.

I HAD SOMETHING ELSE IN MIND.
A GHOST...
...WITH A SWORD?
HUH?
WHAT?
ああああ


KITCHEN
FREE STYLE

DID YOU KILL THEM?
ALL THE SAME, I FEEL SORRY FOR ANYTHING THAT RUNS INTO MR. GOW.
NO, I JUST SENT THEM TO A DIFFERENT DIMENSION. WE'LL LET SOMETHING OVER THERE DO THE DIRTY WORK.
AND TRUST ME, IN THE DIMENSION I SENT THEM TO, THERE WILL BE NO SHORTAGE OF VOLUNTEERS.
WHAT KIND OF GHOST CARRIES AN EXPENSIVE LOOKING SWORD AND HAS THE POWER TO SEND PEOPLE TO OTHER DIMENSIONS?
WHAT KIND OF GHOST ARE YOU?
I CAME FROM ARINAS TO HELP YOU! AND FOR THE LAST TIME, I'M A SPECTER, NOT A GHOST!!
I TOLD YOU ALREADY.

I MAY BE DEAD, BUT I STILL HAVE A SCHEDULE TO KEEP.
I CAN'T STAY HERE TOO LONG, THOUGH.
BUT YOU SAVED ME.
WHY?

I SEE. YOU'RE ONE OF THEM.

I HAVE TO HELP YOU.
YOU HAVE THE THREE TREASURES FROM THE EASTERN KING.

FOR YEARS, I LIVED A CURSED EXISTENCE.
I COULD NOT MOVE.
THEN ONE DAY, OUT OF THE BLUE, THIS KID LIFTS THE CURSE.
AND LONG STORY SHORT, I'M ONCE AGAIN FREE TO DO WHAT I CHOOSE.

WELL, NO, YOU CAN'T.
IT REQUIRES TOO MUCH PHYSICAL AND MENTAL POWER.
UM.
CAN I DO THAT?
YOU WANT TO TOUCH ME, RIGHT?
I DON'T HAVE TO BE HUMAN, RIGHT?
AS LONG AS I BECOME TANGIBLE.
IF I DO THIS FOR HER, IT WILL USE UP THE REST OF MY REMAINING TIME.
I HAVE NO CHOICE.
IF SHE DOESN'T LISTEN TO ME, SHE'LL BE STUCK HERE FOREVER.
HMM...
WELL, YOU CAN STOP LOOKING ALL GHOSTY AND JUST SHOW YOURSELF.
ANYTHING I CAN DO TO CHANGE THAT?
EVEN SO...
THAT DOESN'T MEAN I CAN TRUST YOU!
A THIEF TRUSTS WHAT THEY CAN SEE, HEAR, SMELL AND FEEL. THEY TRUST THEIR SENSES.
...AND NOT MUCH ELSE. AND AS FAR AS THAT GOES, YOU'RE NOT GIVING ME MUCH TO GO ON HERE.
I UNDERSTAND. YOU NEED THINGS TO BE A BIT MORE CLEAR-CUT.
WHAT?

OKAY, I GOT IT. I GOT IT.
IT'S JUST THAT I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE YOU.
I AM A VERY SPECIAL CREATURE.
MOST PEOPLE LIVE THEIR WHOLE LIVES WITHOUT EVER SEEING A SACRED.
BUT YOU KNOW YA DON'T LOOK THAT DIGNIFIED.
I THOUGHT YOU WERE HERE TO HELP US.
SO HELP US, ALREADY.
WE DON'T HAVE TIME.
SO I'M NOT GOING TO ARGUE WITH YOU.
HOW ABOUT THIS?
THIS ANIMAL IS CALLED A SACRED.
OOH. HE'S SO CUTE!
HELLO!
HI THERE, LITTLE FELLA! YOU'RE SO CUTESY-WUTESY WOO WOO.
WOW, A SACRED...

I THOUGHT YOU WERE ALREADY DEAD!
I DON'T SEE HOW THAT HELPS US AT ALL!
WELL, SOMEONE HAS TO BE LOGICAL... LORD KNOWS THIS GHOST ISN'T.
THIS ISN'T HELPING.
WHAT DID YOU MEAN BY WE COULD NEVER GET OUT OF HERE?
I'LL STOP BUT I WANT AN EXPLANATION.
KITCHEL, YOU'RE SUDDENLY ACTING ALL LOGICAL.

AS I SAID... OUR TIME IS LIMITED...
...SO I'LL GET RIGHT TO THE POINT.
THAT'S WHAT I'M TRYING TO DO.
YOU TWO...
...WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO LEAVE HERE.
THAT'S A BIT TOO MUCH TO THE POINT.

I SEE
HE'S A POWERFUL MAN WHO HAS LIVED MANY YEARS.
HE VIEWS THE WORLD AS HIS PLAYGROUND AND CHANGES IT TO SUIT HIS EVERY WHIM.
SO WHY DID HE CAST A SPELL ON THIS CAVE?
DO YOU KNOW?
HE WANTED TO MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO RETRIEVE THE THREE TREASURES.
THE TREASURES WERE ORIGINALLY CREATED BY THE EASTERN KING.
AND THE ALCHEMIST HATES THE EASTERN KING VERY MUCH.
IF YOU KEEP FOLLOWING THE MAP, YOU'LL EVENTUALLY REACH THE EXIT... BUT ONLY AFTER THOUSANDS OF YEARS.
IN THEORY...
...THAT'S TRUE. IN REALITY, THAT'S NOT THE CASE.
IS THAT RIGHT?
BUT I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY WE CAN'T LEAVE. THERE IS A WAY OUT OF THIS PLACE, RIGHT? WE'LL BE ABLE TO FIND THE EXIT EVENTUALLY
I'D IMAGINE I'D BE QUITE QUITE.
YOU KNOW WHO DID IT?
BUT DO YOU KNOW WHO CAST THE SPELL?
ぶんぶん
YES, YES.
WE KNOW THIS ALREADY.
LOOK, THE CURSE ON THIS CAVE CAUSES IT TO EXIST SIMULTANEOUSLY IN DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS, RIGHT?
DAMN...
WHAT SORT OF MAN WOULD CAST SPELLS LIKE THAT?
A LONG TIME AGO HE WAS CALLED THE RENKIN WIZARD.
IT WAS HIS CURSE THAT KEPT ME SEALED IN ARNAS...
...AND THE CURSE HASN'T BEEN COMPLETELY LIFTED YET.

THERE'S A CATCH!
I'M SICK OF THIS CAVE! IT'S SO DARK, MAN. AM I GONNA NEED A TAN...
THAT'S GREAT NEWS!
キャピ キャピ
DID YA HEAR THAT?
WE'LL BE BACK IN DRAQUEEN IN NO TIME!
IF I DO THIS FOR YOU, YOU MUST TAKE ME SOMEWHERE IN RETURN.

What do we do?
SO WE'RE STUCK HERE FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES?!
CALM DOWN!
WHY DO YOU THINK I'M HERE?
くいっ
I'LL BE A FOSSIL BY THEN!
A MILLION, POSSIBLY!
AT MINIMUM.
A THOUSAND YEARS?!
WHAT DID YOU SAY?!
OH, YEAH...
OKAY, I'M LISTENING.
YOU SAW ME BLOW AWAY THOSE DEMONS BACK THERE, RIGHT?
WITH THE SAME MAGIC, I CAN GET YOU OUT OF HERE.
SOUNDS GREAT! LET'S DO IT!

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AAAH!!
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OH
UH..
OOPS.
I'M SORRY.
KITCHIL
THIS IS THE PLACE
IT'S TIME FOR ME TO KEEP A PROMISE I ONCE MADE.

...THE CAVE OF...
MIRATTE?
THIS PLACE?
BUT ISN'T THIS...

THE SUN. IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE I'VE SEEN IT
OOMPH!
BE CAREFUL. THE CLIFF IS QUITE ROCKY.
NO KIDDING.
THIS IS THE EXIT?
YUP.
OH, SHIT!
I LEFT THE THREE TREASURES BACK IN THE CAVE!
HUH?
DON'T SWEAT IT
THIS IS THE ENTRANCE AS WELL AS THE EXIT.
WHEW!
THAT'S A RELIEF!
THE SKY'S A STRANGE COLOR HERE

PRETTY DANGEROUS?
IT GETS PRETTY DANGEROUS FROM HERE SO BE CAREFUL.
YOU GUYS ARE ON YOUR OWN NOW
I NEVER SAW YOUR FACE.
IF WE DID, I WOULDN'T RECOGNIZE YOU.
GOOD LUCK. I'M AFRAID WE WON'T MEET AGAIN.
YOU'RE REALLY LEAVING?
NO TIME TO EXPLAIN

GO BACK?
WHERE YOU GOING?
I CAN'T
I MUST GO BACK
I CANNOT STAY IN THIS FORM FOR LONG.
ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT HEAVEN?
WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO NOW, GHOST?
YOU WANNA STAY A SACRED AND COME WITH US?
SO LONG, MITCHELL...
...AND THANKS.
I SEE.
SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
I MUST PREPARE FOR MY NEXT LIFE.

THANK YOU FOR HELPING US, SPECTER.
OKAY, SO WHERE THE HELL ARE WE, RINGLEYS?
WE NEED TO FIND THE WAY BACK TO DRAQUEEN.
MORE DANGER? THAT'S WHAT HE SAID, RIGHT?
I DON'T THINK THERE ARE ANY DEMONS AROUND HERE.
WE CAN STASH THE TREASURE HERE FOR NOW.
LET'S TAKE A LOOK AROUND TO GET SOME BEARINGS.
WE HAVEN'T SEEN ANOTHER LIVING THING.

THERE'S A FOREST OVER THERE.
AND IT LOOKS LIKE THERE MAY BE A CASTLE, TOO.
YOU'VE GOT GREAT EYES, KITCHEL.
YOU NEED 'EM TO HUNT TREASURE.
I THINK SO. IT'S PRETTY FAR, THOUGH.
CASTLE?
DO YOU?
WELL, YOU HEARD WHAT THE SPECTER TOLD US.
YOU DON'T THINK IT'S TOO DANGEROUS?
WELL, WE MIGHT AS WELL HEAD IN THAT DIRECTION.
SOMEONE MIGHT BE THERE.
BLACKISH RED AND PURPLE. IS THAT NORMAL?
YEAH, AND THE SKY'S ALL WEIRD.
IT'S REALLY COLD HERE.
DO YOU THINK THESE CLIFFS JUST GO ON FOREVER?

ANOTHER TOOL OF THE TRADE, MY FRIEND.
YOU HAVE A GOOD SENSE OF DIRECTION.
IT LOOKS LIKE THE CASTLE IS THAT WAY.
WELL, LOST OR NOT, LORD NADL WILL BE VERY UPSET...
IF I DON'T WELCOME THEM TO HIS KINGDOM...
THEY MUST BE LOST.
SO, WHAT WOULD A HUMAN AND A FAERIE BE DOING IN KAINALDIA?
HMM.
IT APPEARS WE HAVE VISITORS.
WE SHOULD CHECK THE MAP AGAIN.
YEAH, LETS GO
SO DO YA WANNA GO BACK TO THE CAVE?
HMPH.

THIS ISN'T ONE OF NADIL'S LACKEYS, EITHER. HE'S VERY STRONG.
I DON'T THINK WE'RE ALONE.
A DEMON? WHERE?
SOMETHING STRANGE IS GOING ON.
CALL IT A HUNCH.
H-HOW... HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?
I KNEW IT! WE'RE IN DANGER!
UM... RINCLEYS?
YES?
WHAT'S UP?
WE CAN'T. IF HE FOLLOWED US, WE'D BE TRAPPED.
WE'RE TAKING A DETOUR.
WHAT IF HE STEALS THE THREE TREASURES FROM US?
THEN... SHOULDN'T WE GO BACK TO THE CAVE?

IT
THE GHOST WAS RIGHT
THIS PLACE IS DANGEROUS.

WELL, I'M NOT ABOUT TO GO TO THE CASTLE.
WHAT?!
BUT YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT'S IN THE FOREST!
HURRY UP.
BUT TRY NOT TO LOOK LIKE YOU'RE HURRYING.
DETOUR?
BUT WHERE ARE WE GOING?
TO THE FOREST.
DON'T RUN. YOU'LL JUST DRAW ATTENTION TO US.
HEH, HEH.

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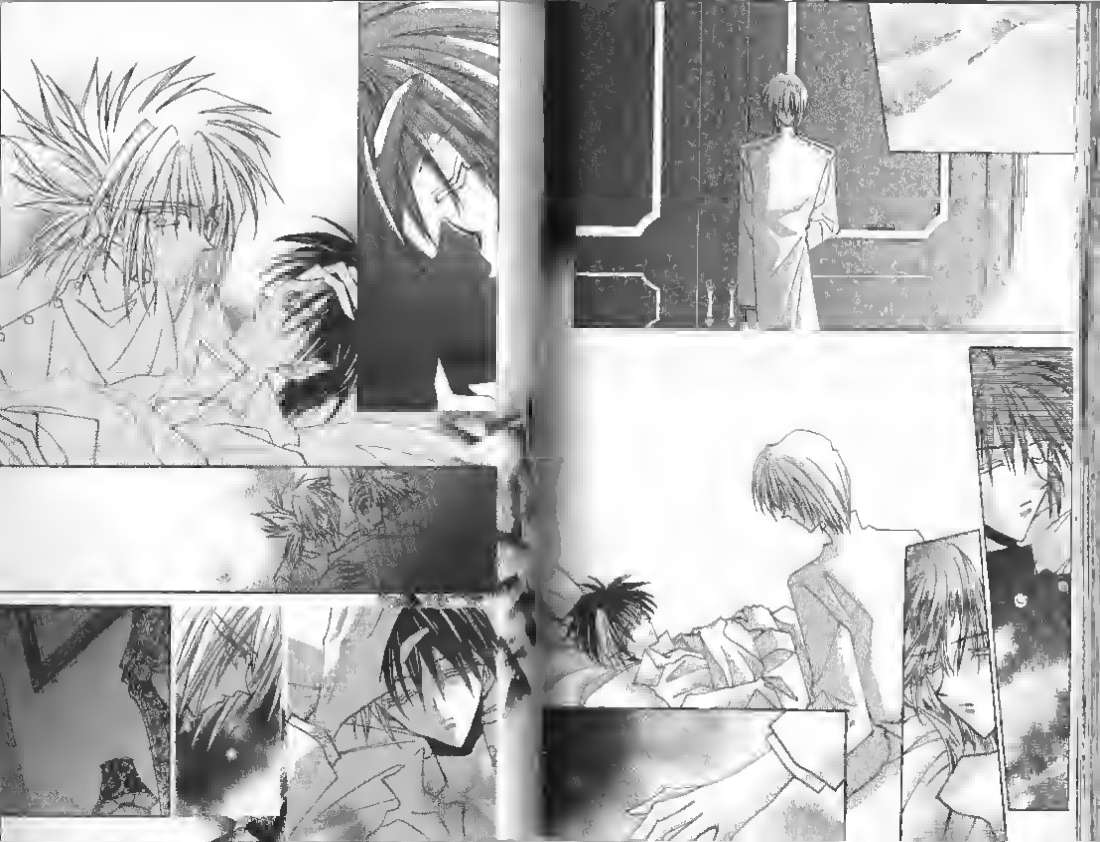
コッ…
コッ…

I KNOW
THEY'RE ABSOLUTELY RELENTLESS. EACH ONE OF THEM WOULD LOVE TO TAKE CREDIT FOR KILLING THE DRAGON LORD.
IF SOMETHING HAPPENS TO LYKOULEON, THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT WILL END.
WE CAN'T HOLD THEM OFF FOREVER.
SO WHAT THE HELL IS THIS? WE'RE SUPPOSED TO FIGHT THESE THINGS OFF WITH ROCKS?
IT'S A PIECE OF A SPIRITUAL STONE CALLED THE STONE OF PUMA.
WE FOUND IT IN A POND BENEATH THE GREAT ALTAR.
RIGHT NOW, THE STONE OF PUMA IS OUR BEST DEFENSE AGAINST THE DEMONS.
LUCKILY, WE STILL HAVE QUITE A BIT OF IT LEFT.
SHIT!
THOSE THINGS AREN'T GIVING UP! WHAT THE HELL ARE THEY?!
THEY'RE DEMONS! THE LORD'S PROTECTIVE BARRIER IS SHOT TO HELL

I DON'T KNOW WHY IT WAS MADE, BUT IT'S NOT SUPPOSED TO BE AS GOOD AS THE ORIGINAL WIND STAFF.
YEP.
SHE SAID THIS WAS A REPLICA?
IT'S ALL WE HAVE.
IN ANY CASE...
IT WAS PROBABLY MADE TO REVIVE RATH.
YES, IT DOES.
THAT SEEMS AWFULLY FAR-FETCHED.
CAN IT REALLY BRING PEOPLE BACK FROM THE DEAD?
WHAT IF IT DOESN'T WORK?
BUT GOD KNOWS WHAT WE'RE GOING TO DO WHEN IT'S GONE.
WELL? DID YOU FIND ANYTHING?
ちゃお!

WHOEVER MADE THIS REPLICA WOULD HAVE NEEDED THE PROPER RESOURCES TO DO SO.
THE ORIGINAL WIND STAFF WAS ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL ARTIFACTS EVER CREATED.
TO CRAFT SUCH A TWIN WOULD REQUIRE A PIECE OF THE ORIGINAL STAFF.
WHAT?
WHO WOULD HAVE ACCESS TO SOMETHING LIKE THAT?
I'M SORRY THAT I BOTHERED YOU.
THAT'S WHAT I WAS AFRAID OF.
I CAN'T DO IT.
I DON'T HAVE THE POWER.
I DON'T KNOW IF THIS STAFF CAN RESTORE LIFE. EVEN IF IT COULD, WE'D NEED CESIA TO USE IT.
HMM... THIS STAFF CONTAINS NOT ONLY CESIA'S POWER, BUT ALSO HOLDS THE POWER OF ARINAS.
OTHERWISE, HE WOULD HAVE DESTROYED IT AS WELL...
ARINAS?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
MY GUESS IS HE DOESN'T KNOW THIS REPLICA EXISTS!
NADIL DESTROYED THE ORIGINAL STAFF.
HE WOULDN'T HAVE LEFT US WITH SOMETHING SO POWERFUL.
NOT KNOWING.Y



BACK THEN, I COULD SPEAK WITH YOU OPENLY.
NOW, I HAVE TO SNEAK INTO THE CASTLE DISGUISED AS A DOCTOR'S ASSISTANT
I CAN'T DO IT.
ALL THESE YEARS I'VE WAITED FOR THIS MOMENT.
AND NOW I FIND I'M TOO SCARED TO ACT.
THE LAST TIME I GOT THIS CLOSE TO YOU,
...YOU WERE BUT A BOY.
I REMEMBER IT WELL.
IT WAS ON A SNOW-COVERED MOUNTAIN.

I COULD STEAL YOU AWAY RIGHT NOW, BUT THERE'D BE HELL TO PAY WHEN YOU WOKE UP.
YOU MUST BE CONFUSED...
.....
I'LL BE BACK.
SHIFT
WE WILL HAVE MORE TIME THEN.

クラッ…
CRACK

HOLD ON.
WAIT A SECOND.
WHAT IS IT?
THANK GOODNESS.
I THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER WAKE UP AGAIN.
A STONE?
WAS SOMEONE JUST HERE?
YOU DID.
DID I OR DID I NOT CHOP MY HEAD OFF IN FRONT OF YOU?
SOMETHING'S WRONG HERE.
LOOK AT ME.
RATH!

AND I CAN ACCEPT YOU...
...NO MATTER WHAT YOU ARE.
REST NOW.
FOR THE TIME BEING, YOU'RE SAFE.

EVERYTHING ELSE WILL BE DEALT WITH IN TIME.
RATH, THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT YOU'RE OKAY.
I'VE KNOWN YOUR SECRET FOR SOME TIME NOW
PERHAPS NOT, BUT NOTHING'S REALLY CHANGED
THINGS ARE DIFFERENT NOW. WE CAN'T GO ON AS BEFORE.

THEY TOUCHED MY FACE AND HELD MY HAND.
THEY FELT... COLD.
SOMEONE WAS HERE WITH ME A LITTLE WHILE AGO.
WAS IT CESIA?
SHE PROMISED THAT SHE WOULD ALWAYS BE WITH ME.
WHERE IS SHE? I'D LIKE TO SEE HER.
RATH...

THE KINGDOM IS IN CHAOS, RATH.
WE'VE BEEN BATTLING DEMONS AROUND THE CLOCK AND TRYING TO SHELTER THE TOWNSPEOPLE.
HOW LONG WAS I ASLEEP?
WHEN WE GOT HERE, THE DOOR WAS SEALED.
IT'S HARD TO TELL.
IT TOOK US AWHILE TO FIND YOU.
WAS IT A LONG TIME?
WHERE'S CESIA?

WHAT'S WRONG?
CESIA... ...IS GONE.
SHE MADE A DEAL WITH NADIL. HE WOULD RETURN TO HIM, AND WE WOULD KILL OFF HIS DEMONS.
WE TRIED TO STOP HER.
BUT WE WERE TOO LATE. SHE WAS GONE.
HEH. HEH..
JUST LIKE CESIA.
SHE'S SUCH A LIAR...

K-KITCHIE, DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING?
BE QUIET! THE FOREST IS RIGHT UP AHEAD
WE CAN HIDE IN THERE.
INTERESTING.
THEY'RE HEADING FOR THE FOREST.
WELL, THEN...
...HAPPY TRAILS.
I MUST FIND CESIA.
HE NEEDS HIS WIND STAFF.

I'LL JUST LET THE FOREST FINISH THEM OFF.
HMM... I CAN'T TELL.
IS IT STILL FOLLOWING US?
HEY! I HAVE AN IDEA!
LET'S HIDE IN A PILE OF LEAVES.
PLEASE TELL ME YOU'RE JOKING.
おぞ
WH-WHAT THE...?
ピク...
DEAD BODIES!
HUH?
WHAT THE HELL?
OH GOD, NO!

OH GOD..
WHAT THE HELL ARE THESE THINGS?!
It's A soul...
A living soul.
.....
SOMETHING HAS AWOKEN IN ME.

...ENTERS THE FOREST OF THE DAMNED.
THIS IS A TREAT! WE SHALL FEAST WELL TODAY.
AFTER ALL, IT'S NOT EVERY DAY THAT A LIVING SOUL...
THIS IS WELL WORTH WAKING FOR!
HEH, HEH, HEH...
HA HA HA HA!

I CAN'T ...
NOT NOW.
RATH...
LET'S GO.
NO WAY.
I CAN'T LET YOU SEE HIM.
RATH!!
RATH!
C'MON, RATH!
YOU CAN'T DO IT!

I WAS AFRAID OF THIS.
WHAT DO I DO?
RATH!
TEN TO ME!
IT'S NOTHING PERSONAL. WE'RE NOT ALLOWED TO SEE THE LORD, EITHER.
BESIDES, YOU SHOULDN'T EVEN BE OUT OF BED
IT'S NO USE.
YEAH...
NADIL TORE DOWN THE CASTLE'S PROTECTIVE BARRIER.
SINCE THEN, THE DEMON ATTACKS HAVE BEEN NONSTOP.
THESE ARE ALL...
DEAD DEMONS.

SHE'S A DEMON.
AND SHE HAS THE ABILITY TO ENHANCE HIS POWER.
HER VERY EXISTENCE IS GIVING NADIL STRENGTH.
HUH?
THEY'RE EVERY-WHERE.
NADIL'S POWER HAS STRENGTHENED.
?
DOES THE DRAGON TRIBE REALLY NEED HER?
HOW IMPORTANT IS SHE?
TELL ME THE TRUTH.
CESIA.
DO YOU TRUST HER?

...WE MUST GET HER BACK AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
RUNE'S RIGHT. WE CAN'T LEAVE HER WITH NADIL.
AND HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT CESIA, RATH?
YOU MIGHT AS WELL TELL US THE TRUTH.
YES...
YOU SHOULD TRUST YOUR FEELINGS, RATH. YOU KNOW CESIA BETTER THAN ANY OF US.
YEAH, IT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW YOUR THOUGHTS ON THIS.
WHY?
WHAT DOES IT MATTER?!
AN EXCUSE
STOP IT.
YOU'RE JUST LOOKING FOR AN EXCUSE.
THAT'S NOT TRUE.
THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT
むかっ!
YOU WANT A REASON TO GO AFTER CESIA.
THE TRUTH IS THAT CESIA IS A DEMON AND A LIAR
AND WITH HER BY HIS SIDE, NADIL IS UNDEFEATABLE.
THAT IS WHY
THEN WHY ASK THAT QUESTION?
HOW DID YOU EXPECT US TO ANSWER?

HE'S RIGHT. DID YOU KNOW THAT TETHEUS USED TO BE A DEMON, TOO?
AND THEN THERE'S ZOMA.
CESIA'S A DEMON.
AND IT WOULD APPEAR THAT SHE'S IN GOOD COMPANY.
...KNOW WHAT KIND OF DEMON I WAS.
BUT NEITHER RUNE NOR THATZ...
SO...
...WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS, EVEN IF YOU'RE A DEMON...
...YOU'RE WELCOME IN THE DRAGON TRIBE IF YOU BELIEVE IN THEIR CAUSE.
IT'S NOT ABOUT WHETHER YOU'RE A DEMON OR NOT.
MEN, ELVES AND DEMONS ALL CHOOSE THEIR OWN BATTLES.

PROMISES?
.....
I THINK...
...THAT CESIA SHOULD LEARN TO KEEP HER PROMISES
FINE.
CALM DOWN
HEY!
THAT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS!
WHAT DID SHE PROMISE YOU, RATH?

NOW, THEN.
I KNOW YOU STILL WANT TO RESCUE CESIA.
I'M RIGHT!!
AM I WRONG?
WELL, I'M GLAD ALL *THAT* IS SETTLED
YES, YOU'RE WRONG!
IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK.
THAT'S WHY WE ACCEPT YOU, RATH.
AND THE SAME GOES FOR CESIA.
BECAUSE OF ME, FAR TOO MANY PEOPLE HAVE DIED.
I'M NOT ABOUT TO LOSE ANY MORE.
THEY REALLY ACCEPT ME...
AND CESIA.

RATH'S BLAMING HIMSELF.
IT LOOKS THAT WAY.
I THINK THAT'S WHY HE NEEDS CESIA BACK. SHE'S A CALMING FORCE FOR HIM.
I'M TO BLAME...
WHICH IS WHY I MUST GET CESIA BACK MYSELF.

SIGH
AND WE'LL HELP HIM... IN ANY WAY WE CAN.
I COULDN'T TELL YOU WE MAY HAVE TO USE YARAWOO'S POWER.
BY THE WAY, HOW DO WE GET TO KAINALDIA?

YOU AND I AND THE REST OF THE DRAGON TRIBE ARE DIFFERENT.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO HARBOR THAT SORT DARKNESS WITHIN US.
IT'S FUNNY TO THINK OF A DEMON AS A CALMING FORCE, BUT YOU'RE RIGHT.
SHE CAN RELATE TO RATH IN WAYS WE CAN'T.
IT AFFECTS RATH.
HE CAN'T HIDE THE PAIN IN HIS EYES.
I THINK CESIA PROBABLY KNOWS HIM BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE.
WELL, I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT. WE'VE BOTH NEARLY BEEN TURNED INTO DEMONS.
IT'S NOT THE SAME, RUNE. YOU KNOW THAT
IT'LL BE OKAY
HE'LL MANAGE TO WORK IT ALL OUT.

THEY'VE DONE IT BEFORE. DON'T FORGET, THEY WERE THE ONES WHO RETRIEVED NADIL'S HEAD IN THE FIRST PLACE.
THINK ABOUT IT, RUWALK.
YOU ARE THE ONE WHO MUST MAKE THE FINAL DECISION.
BUT YOU DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME TO DECIDE.
THANK YOU.
I MUST THINK THIS OVER.
WE WILL DEFEND IT TO OUR VERY ENDS.
THE DRAGON WARRIORS AND I WILL DO OUR BEST TO PROTECT THE CASTLE.

THERE'S NO PUTTING IT OFF. THE DEMON SIEGE IS WEAKENING US BY THE DAY.
WE MUST STRIKE NOW, WHILE WE STILL HAVE THE STRENGTH
KAIN-ALDIA?
I AGREE. BUT SENDING THE DRAGON KNIGHTS TO KAINALDIA?
IT'S SUICIDE.
I'M NOT EVEN SURE THEY'LL DO IT.

HEY!
DON'T BE SO HASTY.
WE CAN'T PUT THIS OFF ANY LONGER, THAT'S.
WE CAN DO IT.
I CAN STILL USE VARAWOO'S POWER.
NO.
IT'S NOT THAT..
WHAT'S WRONG?
I'VE NEVER KNOWN YOU TO BE CAUTIOUS

EVEN THOUGH I WAS ONCE A DEMON MYSELF, . .
RUWALK HAS CHOSEN ME TO LEAD THE GUARDS' DEFENSE.
I MUST NOT LET HIM DOWN.
ONE MORE THING...
THERE'S SOMETHING I HAVEN'T TOLD YOU.
HOW CAN THEY POSSIBLY GET THERE IN ENOUGH TIME?
KAINALDIA IS A LONG DISTANCE AWAY.

TETHIUS...
YOU SAW IT, THATZ. YOU KNOW WHAT VARAWOO'S POWER CAN DO.
YES, I REMEMBER.
WHAT?
WHERE DOES IT LEAD?
BESIDES...
YOU KNOW THAT VARAWOO'S POWER CAN OPEN A PORTAL TO KAINALDIA. BUT YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE THAT PORTAL LEADS.
THE ENERGY SURGE ALONE WOULD DRAW THE ATTENTION OF EVERY DEMON IN KAINALDIA.
NADI...
WILL SENSE OUR PRESENCE IMMEDIATELY.
WAIT, RUNE...
I THINK VARAWOO'S POWER MAY BE TOO STRONG.
THEY'RE DEPENDING ON US.
LET'S GO.
RATH IS RIGHT.
IT'S A BAD IDEA.

...AND CONVINCE IT TO TAKE US TO KAINALDIA.
WE MUST FIND ONE OF THESE DEMONS...
BUT WHAT DEMON WOULD AGREE TO THAT?
AND WHERE WOULD WE FIND ONE?
WELL, JEEZ, TETHERIS... WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST SAY SO?
I'LL JUST POP OUTSIDE AND ASK ONE OF THE DEMONS TRYING TO KILL US. I'M SURE THEY WON'T MIND GIVING US THE KEYS TO THEIR KINGDOM.
YOU WOULD BE WALKING RIGHT INTO NADIL'S HANDS.
I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!
WHAT?!
DAMN...
WE CAN'T DO NOTHING.
BUT WHAT OTHER OPTIONS DO WE HAVE?
DIRECTLY ABOVE NADIL'S CASTLE.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
ANY DEMON WHO HAS RECEIVED NADIL'S POWER SHOULD HAVE THIS ABILITY.
CERTAIN DEMONS CAN TRAVEL BETWEEN THE TWO REALMS WITHOUT THE USE OF A PORTAL.

WHAT?!!!
SAY AGAIN?
HO?!
I HAVE A DEMON ALREADY IN MIND.
I GET REPORTS FROM THE DRAGON WARRIORS PATROLLING THE CASTLE GROUNDS.

WE SHOULD ASK IF HAPPY HAVEN'T ALREADY KILLED HIM!!
I KNOW. IT'S A LONG SHOT AT BEST.
YOU'RE NOT HELPING.
SORRY
BUT, SEE?...
I CAN TELL YOU.
I CAN SENSE NADIL'S POWER WITHIN A DEMON. BUT I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE TO LOOK.
WELL, WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?
EVEN IF WE FIND A DEMON WILLING TO TALK TO US, HOW WILL WE KNOW IF IT HAS NADIL'S POWER?
WE HAVE TO FIND SOMEONE...
...AND WE HAVE TO FIND THEM FAST

RATH.
- IS THE ONLY SUCCESSOR TO THE DRAGON EMPEROR.
BUT I CAN'T TELL HIM THAT.
KNOWING RATH, HE WOULDN'T LISTEN.
WE'VE WASTED ENOUGH TIME.
WE MUST FIND THAT DEMON.

THERE IS A DEMON WHO FREQUENTLY TRAVELS BETWEEN THE TWO WORLDS.
HE COLLECTS CORPSES AND TAKES THEM TO KAINALDIA.
COLLECTS CORPSES?
COME ON.
I'VE NEVER ACTUALLY SEEN HIM MYSELF.
THE ONLY PROBLEM IS THAT I DON'T KNOW WHAT HE LOOKS LIKE.

Dragon Knights

14

In Volume 14:

Kitchel and Ringleys make their way through the nightmarish Forest of the Damned as the Dragon Knights begin their quest for Kamaldia. Rumors of a corpse-collecting demon bring them to the outskirts of Draqueen where they're reunited with an old friend. (And we mean old, you'll have go all the way back to Volume 1 for this one!) Pleasantries are cut short, however, by a sinister revelation and the meddlesome interference of Saabel, who strikes a grave blow to the Dragon Knights by doing the unthinkable. As for what that is...well, we wouldn't dream of giving it away!

Mineko Ohkami